

Message Text

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54

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

NEAE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01

EB-07 CU-02 ACDA-05 SAL-01 SAB-01 /091 W

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O P 091822Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8657

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 07094

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FR SY XF

SUBJECT: QUAI COMMENTS ON ASAD VISIT AND ARAB-ISRAELI
PROBLEM

ACTION REQUESTED: SEE LAST PARAGRAPH

1. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE LEVANT, HENRI SERVANT,
TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 9 THAT SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASAD'S MARCH
15-18 VISIT TO FRANCE IS THE OUTGROWTH OF AN INVITATION
EXTENDED LAST SEPTEMBER. AT THAT TIME, THE FRENCH
SENSED A CERTAIN SYRIAN "FRUSTRATION" AT ASAD'S NOT HAV-
ING YET BEEN OFFERED THE OFFICIAL VISIT ALREADY ACCORDED
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TO LEADERS OF OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. MOREOVER, THE

FRENCH THOUGHT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT'S SEEMING DESIRE TO DECREASE HIS DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIETS AND TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH THE WEST, AND OF THE RELATIVELY FAVORABLE POSITION FRANCE ENJOYS WITH SYRIA BECAUSE OF BOTH THE TWO COUNTRIES' HISTORIC TIES AND FRENCH POLICY ON THE ISRAELI-ARAB DISPUTE. THE QUAI HOPES THAT ASAD'S LEAVING HIS "ARAB-SOCIALIST GHETTO" WILL EXPOSE HIM TO WESTERN IDEAS AND THUS, PERHAPS, BROADEN HIS PERSPECTIVE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT A MIDEAST SETTLEMENT.

2. AS FOR ASAD, SERVANT CONTINUED, HE PROBABLY WANTS TO PROBE FRENCH AND WESTERN ATTITUDES AND TO BUILD HIS IMAGE AS ARAB STATESMAN, AS WELL AS TO GET OUT FROM UNDER THE SOVIET SHADOW. THE FRENCH EXPECT TO SIGN CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ACCORDS, BUT DO NOT KNOW WHETHER ASAD IS INTERESTED IN BUYING ARMS. SERVANT OFFERED HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT ASAD WILL NOT YET SEEK TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT ARMS PURCHASES IN THE WEST. SADAT, ACCORDING TO SERVANT, IS BETTING ON THE SUCCESS OF HIS POLICY OF FAVORING THE US AND THE WEST, WHICH, IF SUCCESSFUL, WILL RESULT IN A SETTLEMENT AND MAKE THE QUESTION OF ARMS UNIMPORTANT. ASAD, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS MADE NO SUCH CALCULATION AND WILL CONTINUE TO RELY ON THE SOVIETS TO PROVIDE ARMS FOR THE CONFLICT WHICH HE PROBABLY SEES AS ALMOST INEVITABLE. (SERVANT NOTED THAT SHOULD SADAT DECIDE HIS CURRENT POLICY WON'T WORK, HE IS QUITE CAPABLE OF SUDDENLY TURNING AGAIN TO THE SOVIETS FOR ARMS, WHICH THE LATTER WOULD SUPPLY WITH DELIGHT.)

3. SERVANT OBSERVED THAT BECAUSE OF HIS PRESENT PREDOMINANCE WITHIN SYRIA, HIS NEWLY-FORGED TIES WITH HUSSEIN AND HIS CURRENT STRONG INFLUENCE IN LEBANON, ASAD IS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A RELATIVELY STRONG POSITION TO NEGOTIATE AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WERE HE SO INCLINED. (SERVANT ALSO UNDERLINED THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF THE LEBANESE TRUCE AND THE DANGERS FOR SYRIAN DIPLOMACY, AND MIDDLE EAST PEACE, OF ASAD'S EXERTING TOO MUCH, OR TOO LITTLE, PRESSURE IN LEBANON.) SERVANT THOUGHT THAT DESPITE THE RABIN GOVERNMENT'S ADMITTEDLY WEAK POSITION TO UNDERTAKE

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SUCH NEGOTIATIONS, THE MOMENT MAY BE RIPE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS POSSIBLE SYRIAN WILLINGNESS TO MOVE. SERVANT HINTED THAT THE WORKING LEVEL OF THE QUAI IS RECOMMENDING THAT SAUVAGNARGUES AND GISCARD RAISE THIS POSSIBILITY IN A GENERAL WAY WITH ASAD DURING HIS VISIT, BUT HE APPEARED DUBIOUS THAT EITHER THE PRESIDENT OR FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD, IN FACT, TAKE SUCH AN INITIATIVE.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: SHOULD THE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY MESSAGE IT WOULD LIKE THE FRENCH TO CONVEY TO ASAD, WE BELIEVE THE QUAI MIGHT BE OPEN TO OUR SUGGESTIONS. ANY SUCH MESSAGE SHOULD REACH THE EMBASSY BY MORNING OF MARCH 11 TO BE OF MAXIMUM UTILITY.
RUSH

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